FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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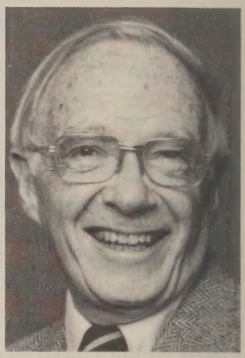
Cover Photograph by Janet Gnall: Jenny: a Native American Girl from the Tigua Reservation, El Paso, Texas



Of all of the world's spiritual paths, I can think of none that are closer to the ideals of Fellowship in Prayer's founders than that of Native Americans. A highly spiritual people, they invoke the help and blessing of *Wakan Tanka*, the Great Mystery (or Great Spirit, as the words are often translated into English) for everything they do.

Perhaps the most basic of Native American religious ceremonies and rituals is the so-called "sweat lodge," an intense purification and rebirth ceremony led by a tribal holy person. Inside the lodge, the participants pray unceasingly for divine help and guidance, that they may be healed and granted the strength and courage to walk "the good red road" of truth and compassion and love all the days of their lives. Those who crawl into the four foot high sweat lodge leave their egos and selfish desires outside, with the goal of emerging an hour or so later, as a "walking prayer," purified in mind, body and spirit.

Recently, Fellowship in Prayer sponsored three days of "sweats," with some twenty-five men and women participating in the ceremonies led by Barrett Eagle Bear, a Native American medicine woman, or holy person. She is also one of the select few allowed to take part in the sacred Sun Dance ceremony and a pipe carrier trained in the Lakota tradition.

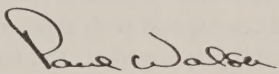
The sweat lodge was one of the most numinous experiences of my life, as it was for others I spoke with afterwards. For three days, each of us in the lodge, sitting in a circle on the earth, prayed in the intense darkness and fiery heat of the sacred space in which we were contained for the sick, poor, and oppressed of the world; for Mother Earth; for our family and friends and all our relations in the natural world; and, finally, for ourselves—that we might be made whole again and realize our total interrelatedness and interdependence with each other and all of creation.

There were among us those who had not prayed since childhood but who, deeply moved by the spirit and the prayers of their neighbors, were able for the first time in years to pray, often in tears, for those they cared about most deeply, for the Earth, and for themselves. They found the

sweat lodge to be a sacred space in which to heal the spirit and open the heart.

Others, strongly rooted in their own faith traditions, spoke of the renewal and affirmation of their deepest spiritual beliefs as they experienced the beauty and truth of the sweat lodge. Still others, believing with Gandhi that the basic, bedrock beliefs of all the great religions point to the same reality, found the simplicity and power of the sweat lodge reconnected them with the best and most holy part of themselves, and with the divine spirit that flows through all of creation. For still others, self-described as "non-religious," Barrett Eagle Bear—through her teaching and in her person both in and out of the sweat lodge—brought the dimension of spirit back into their lives in a deeply moving and powerful way. Barrett Eagle Bear and the sweat lodge were not *about* religion, or spirituality, or a sacred path—they *were* all those things, experienced at the deepest level.

By bringing Eagle Bear and her teachings to the east coast, Fellowship in Prayer is surely doing what it was meant to do, and we hope she will be back with us in the fall. *Mitakuye oyasin.*



Paul Walsh

Without some form of community, individual prayer cannot be born or developed. Communal and individual prayer belong together as two folded hands.

Henri Nouwen

When George Gallup spoke recently at Princeton Theological Seminary, he emphasized the deep need in America today for a sense of community. Expressing concern about the individualism that characterizes the spiritual lives of many Americans, the impersonal nature of our institutions, the break-down of the family, and the loneliness of people who no longer feel they belong anywhere, he called for churches and synagogues to confront the urgency of the problem and to deal with it creatively. One of the solutions he proposed was the formation of small faith communities "rooted in prayer."

Fellowship in Prayer began last February to respond to this critical need for community—in America and on a planet-wide basis—with a new feature called "Interfaith Network." In this feature we invited our readers in 80 countries to publish their names and addresses in *FiP*, so that they could correspond with each other, or meet at local levels to share their faith and pray together. The response has been heart-warming.

A woman in Mississippi joined the community "to be one with others in prayer for our warring, dying Planet Earth." A graduate student asked to be included because he "values nothing more highly than truthful dialogue." A retired man who feels unwanted is corresponding with an unemployed man who feels the same way. A Connecticut couple decided to participate "to promote worldwide understanding." A Protestant and a Buddhist are writing just to learn about each other's religious beliefs.

These people have been telling us that by sharing their spiritual insights, their experience of prayer and meditation, and—most of all—by praying together or for each other or for the world's needs, they are finding not only solace and support and friendship, but a growing sense of the presence of God. I am reminded of the often-quoted remark that "Our relationship to God will only be as deep as our deepest human relationship."

If you would like to join our community, just write to us at 291 Witherspoon St., Princeton, NJ 08542 and we will list your name in our next issue.

Mary Ford-Grabowsky

Janet Gnall

Just to be is a blessing
Just to live is holy.
Abraham Joshua Heschel

What can I say to you, my God? Shall I collect together all the words that praise your holy Name? shall I give you all the names of this world, you, the Unnameable? Shall I call you God of my life, meaning of my existence, hallowing of my acts, my journey's end, bitterness of my bitter hours, home of my loneliness, you my most treasured happiness? Shall I say: Creator, Sustainer, Pardoner, Near One, Distant One, Incomprehensible One, God both of flowers and stars, God of the gentle wind and of terrible battles, Wisdom, Power, Loyalty and Truthfulness, Eternity and Infinity, you the All-merciful, you the Just One, you Love itself?
Karl Rahner

Who has repented travels toward God.
Theophan

The breezes at dawn have secrets to tell you.
don't go back to sleeep!
You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep!
People are going back and forth
Across the doorsill where the two worlds touch,
The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep!
Rumi

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
Ps. 27.1

Throughout my whole life, during every moment I have lived, the world has gradually been taking on light and fire for me, until it has come to envelop me in one mass of luminosity, glowing from within, . . . the purple flush of matter imperceptibly fading into the gold of spirit, to be lost finally in the incandescence of a personal universe. . . .

This is what I have learnt from my contact with the earth—the diaphany of the divine at the heart of a glowing universe, the divine radiating from the depths of matter a-flame.
Teilhard de Chardin

The Sacredness of Aging: an Interview with John H. Valentine, M.D.

With advances in medicine and healthier lifestyles many Americans live into their 70s, 80s and 90s. How many of these older Americans are developing their full spiritual potential? What is their spirituality like? What kind of a spirituality can help people to find peace of mind and a meaningful lifestyle in the post-retirement years? For answers to these questions, we interviewed Dr. John Valentine, a psychiatrist who specializes in the care of the elderly.

Q. What is spiritual development like after the age of 70 or so?

A. I think it's like any other time of life. It's a time of a test. In certain kinds of Buddhism they speak of little ones, children, as having just come from the deity and of elderly as once again approaching the transcendent. In that conceptual system existence brings tests: people have spiritual and secular work to do in "the going down" as far as this planet goes.

If there is indeed an afterlife as most people believe, then you need to go down well, as well as the test permits you and the rest of your experience on this planet has permitted you. But in aging you get a special sort of a test that's different from other phases of life.

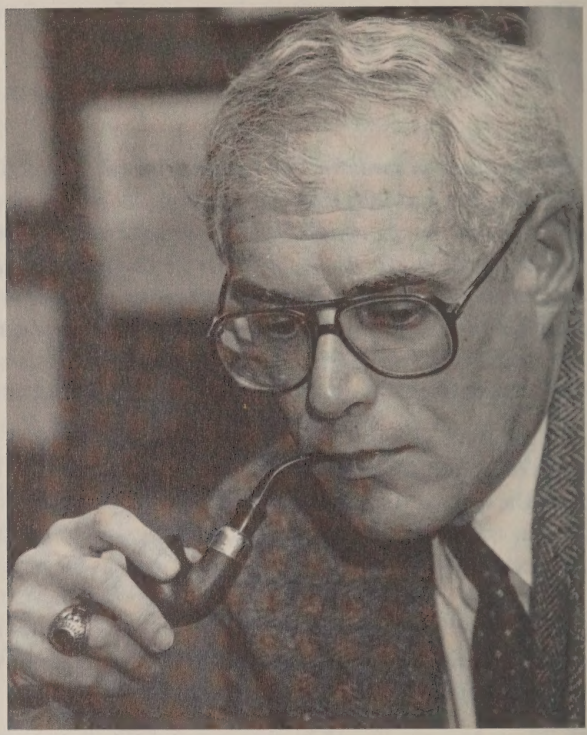
Q. How does the "test" in elderhood differ from earlier tests?

A. First of all you have more knowledge, you've been on the planet longer. You've experienced a lot of life. I believe this pushes most people toward the divine. Their ego is more easily set aside; they've seen enough follies in themselves and those around them that they are approaching an ability to do things rightly—with rectitude.

Q. Meaning?

A. Meaning lining up with the eternal, with the iron laws of nature, with the parts of their personality that really ring true and shine forth. Maybe not the best parts, but the ones that have stood the test of time. So they

A member of the faculty at the Medical School of the University of Pennsylvania, John Valentine has a private psychiatric practice in Cheltenham, PA. He combines academics, comprehensive clinical care, and Jungian thought in his approach to advanced life, its problems and spirituality. Dr. Valentine is also a writer and a frequent lecturer at the C. G. Jung Center of Philadelphia.



Janet Gnall

John H. Valentine, M.D.

are in a position to be very authentic and true to themselves and not be hung up on status or ego considerations or power or even affiliation. There can be, as one part of the features of the going down, a devotion to truth—to an eternal verity—that is different than in earlier phases of life.

Q. Considering the suffering that the later years can bring, the physical pain and the diminishments, one would think that it would be much harder to develop spiritually in elderhood than in youth.

A. Actually, the shape of ageing is changing in that what we're seeing recently is a large number of people who live in basically pretty good health until all of a sudden, all kinds of systems suddenly fail, and there's

a very rapid, cliff-like, fall-off. But for a very long period there is quite good health and that is the time of testing: what these folks do with that period of life, sixty-five plus, seventy plus, up until that rapid cliff. Undoubtedly there are people who slowly become disabled and stay disabled, but the interesting thing of probably the last twenty years is that with advances in medicine, especially medicine below the neck, older people can have very good health and do a lot of things internally and externally for a long period until that cliff comes when three or four systems suddenly go.

Q. Do you often see people at that stage of rapid decline who are able to connect with the divine?

A. I think it depends on whether or not they've used the post-retirement years wisely, internally and externally. If they have, they then draw upon

> As Ambrose Paré, the great French surgeon, said 400 years ago, "God heals, I just put the edges of the wound together."

that experience in their rapid going down. They've heaped up internal credits, if you will, that they draw on. I was in a man's room Saturday and Sunday, over at Holy Redeemer Hospital. The room was filled with balloons, with lots of kids' pictures, lots of flowers. This fellow was in his late 80s, and these were tributes perhaps from great-grandchildren. This man was actively dying and yet surrounded by all this good will and still exercising in his decline the same sort of good will. This was an extraordinary scene between the dramatic quality of the care and concern and the tribute to him on the one hand, and his own medical miseries on the other hand. But he was in contact with both sides of that and was dying with dignity and grace and with an appropriate sense of a rich life well lived. He was not denying death and he didn't feel terribly good about it, but he appeared to be going down well, both internally and externally.

Q. Would you say he was conscious of the presence of God?

A. It appeared to me that God was very much in that room. God's footprints were in those balloons and flowers and pictures, and the dying man knew it. He had some last lessons to teach all these people about how to die.

Janet Gnall

Q. What lessons?

A. I think it's a series of lessons. It is to do your best to go out in contact with day-to-day humanity; to sum up your life; to turn within and make that contact with God; cooperate with the health care people trying to give you meaningful life; allow people to be gracious to you and be gracious in return. Americans, as we all know, are great givers, but we're not good at receiving. This man was a graceful receiver. He was thankful and allowed people to honor him and in doing so honor themselves. He allowed that exchange, that back and forth, which a lot of Americans are not very practiced at. Unlike people in other parts of the world where the leave-taking at the end of life is a much more psycho-social and spiritual event. He was permitting it to be a very rich experience.

Q. Are many older people in our society developing their full spiritual potential?

A. I think the greatest problem in ageing has to do with usefulness. A great deal of spiritual development, in this regard, is blocked. St. Benedict defined the balanced life as "*ora et labora*," "to pray and to work," and that alternation has withstood the test of time as what needs to be done throughout the entire life cycle. But in our present retirement system and in our attitudes towards the elderly, we go to great lengths to undermine the usefulness of these older people and large numbers of them are seduced into going along with these attitudes.

Q. They buy the stereotype of having lost their usefulness.

A. They buy it, and the result is a hollow external and internal experience. If you will, it's one of the first tests that an ageing person faces: the test of remaining useful, to themselves, to their God, to life on the planet. The mastery of that early test is very important for their spiritual development.

What they need to do for their own development and possibly for their own salvation is to reconceptualize how to be useful in one or more ways. That is best achieved through activities within the family, within their marriages, within local communities or neighborhoods, with actual manual or intellectual production, on an ongoing basis.

Q. Through volunteer work, for example?

A. Or through the generation of income. Social Security rules permit Americans to make 7 or 8 thousand dollars. If half the elderly in this country earned half of that $8,000 limit and gave it away to homeless people, to any of the worthy causes in America, for all the little jobs that don't get done in this country, one would have a much enriched America. And the meaning in terms of peoples' lives, including the spiritual meaning, would be immense.

Q. In a talk at the C. G. Jung Center in Philadelphia, you spoke about "the sacredness of ageing," and you related it to service, to doing for others. Would you elaborate on that a little.

A. I feel all phases of the life cycle are sacred. In youth there is that wonderful potential of human life in a fully functioning little one or teenager. That's a unique kind of sacredness. There is nothing like a three-year-old playing hard and falling asleep at the end of the day. There is nothing like a tired teenager after a full afternoon of sports and three hours of homework. There's a special kind of sacredness to a young person pushing the limits of their potential and acquiring information and experiences and, as the kids say today, "getting their act together." That's their job. It should be done well. There is a right to be well born and well reared, which is the sacredness of infants and children and teenagers.

Then it's in the establishment of young adulthood. Starting a career, buying the first house, forming a new social unit called a family, learning about the wider world, thinking of making a difference, of changing the

> There is nothing extra in the body or the mind. Every part of our existence has a reason or a purpose.

planet a bit, giving a darn about their generation in some fashion, great or small. That's the special sacredness of young adulthood.

Then there is a sacredness in command. Those of us in our 40s and 50s who basically run things in American society and the world have both the glory and the burden of doing it well for those ahead of us and those behind us. We've worked our way up through the ranks. For better or worse we're here. We're the ones in command for the next 20 years and hopefully we would like to do it better than it was done before.

That gets into the special sacredness of elderhood. Having economic and life needs and children largely behind them, older people need to, for their own sake, share their experience, and work for the betterment of the planet. Not from a *command* position but from an *experience* position. I don't think they need to *do* in order for their lives to be sacred; for me, all human life is sacred. It's just from being, not from doing. I think it's built in, but it is enhanced by living rightly in the divine plan.

Q. You made the remark in one of your lectures that the therapist's goal with the elderly is to "mid-wife" wisdom. What did you mean by that?

A. It's hard to mid-wife yourself. My role with the elderly is to not patronize them but to ask the hard questions of them in a mid-wifery sort of way, pushing and encouraging. The elderly, especially in counseling, are often patronized. They're often dismissed as irrelevant. It's a type of ageism. It's a real mistake to not deal with them as whole persons. One needs to recognize their illnesses and the fact basis of their complaints, but if they're in this office wanting help and they have the intelligence to get here, I'm going to have the intelligence to deal with them as if they really do want a remedy. And that includes not patronizing.

While my role is like that of an obstetrician, the energy comes from the patient. The energy of creation is within them; I'm just arranging conditions. As Ambrose Paré, the great French surgeon said 400 years ago, "God heals, I just put the edges of the wound together." That's another way of describing what a good therapist does. One arranges conditions and creates the crucible in which the transformation can occur. I think the elderly are uniquely equipped to use symbols if, again, they're not patronized. In work with the elderly I will present the symbolic value of what they're relating.

Q. You mean through dream work?

A. Through dream work and also working with their psycho-social transactions with their families, with their spouses, with the neighbors, with the world. We not only look at the day-to-day dimensions of that but at the symbolic levels. Because of the pull of the transcendent on them, the elderly are more open to symbolic work.

Q. Could you give an example of an elderly patient's dream that helped them to move forward or adapt or grow in some way?

A. I'm thinking of a person whom I saw last week who had a dream connected with her mother. The mother was beckoning to her. Now this woman is in her 70s and her mother is dead. As we looked at the dream, the mother was also prompting her to do some more work here involving settling up with her daughters, in terms of letters, in terms of forgiveness. The mother was trying to get my patient's attention: half pulling her to the mother and half saying there was this other dimension of things still to do. It was a curious kind of mixed symbol. She was being pulled in two directions, and the prompt was to do both. Perhaps the settling up will permit her more unrestricted spiritual bonds with life on the planet and the Deity.

Q. In one of your papers, you quoted the observation that much in the human psyche points toward an afterlife. Is this mother-daughter dream an example of that?

A. In various places in C. G. Jung's writings, he says—and I can validate this with my own experience of working with people in all phases of the life cycle, but especially with the elderly—that people cannot imagine their own non-existence. It's as if—and the critical words here are "as if"—we are programmed that there is an afterlife and we will go on eternally. I personally don't have any problem with that philosophically, because I feel that it's impossible for a person who exists to really imagine non-existence, to imagine nothingness. Even in space there are things; they may be sub-atomic, but space is very crowded with things. So, in this sense, there is no knowledge of nothingness that we can possibly have, and everything in the unconscious points towards further existence in some form, off the planet. Our minds are set up as if that were true.

Even where people see themselves dead in a dream, what they are usually seeing is a part of themselves that has died. A part of their personality has died. It doesn't point towards the complete elimination of their personality. I've yet to encounter a dream where somebody came in and said, "I evaporated," or "I ceased to exist."

Q. But ultimately, the afterlife is a faith and hope issue, isn't it?

A. It seems psychologically true that there is an afterlife. Human beings believe in something more going on.

Janet Gnall

Q. Would you elaborate on what you mean by "psychologically true."

A. There is nothing extra in the body or the mind. Every part of our existence has a reason or a purpose. We can't eliminate anger or rage; there are rage centers in the brain. Built into the brain is, apparently, a concept of an afterlife and nothing is in the mind that doesn't have some fundamental purpose. If the concept of an afterlife is a fiction, it's a useful fiction, and with Pascal I believe we'd better operate as if there *were* an afterlife. Everything I know as a psychiatrist says that everything in the human programming in a normal human being—and in many people who aren't so normal—suggests that there is an afterlife. There is nothing extra in nature so there must be a reason that the idea is there.

Q. I recall your saying in a lecture that the very fact that people exist beyond the child rearing years implies that there is a purpose in the decades that follow child rearing. Could you elaborate on this?

A. I think these years are the time of the advancement of the human condition. The phases of reproduction and basic nurturance of the young are, by and large, pretty standard and mundane and do not use the full richness of the human neo-cortex, of our brain, this very elaborate machine. It takes a certain period of time beyond the nitty gritty of child rearing to really get to use the fine details of that wonderful instrument known as the neo-cortex.

Q. The mystics in the religious traditions usually put growth in love ahead of the development of the neo-cortex.

A. I suppose, like most physicians, I think the capacity to love lies above the neck.

Q. You don't think a deeper level of consciousness might exist—shall we say—"below the neck"?

A. Certainly in Hinduism there are several souls, or *chakras*: one in the groin, one in the stomach, one in the heart, one in the voice, and others. In that belief system people work their way up and through those. I think that the Hindus were on to something and that we do need the integration of all those levels of *chakras*. People, including elderly people, need to be viscerally active in their sexuality; they need to get enough nurtur-

One of the first tests that an aging person faces (is) the test of remaining useful: to themselves, to their God, to life on the planet. The mastery of that test is very important for their spiritual development.

ance; they need to be industrious; they need to be vocal, and they need to think and feel and love.

When I talk about the development of the neo-cortex, I don't mean just the intellect, I mean the development of human richness and human advancement, human inauguration, which is tied in with wisdom and experience, love and intellect. If you will, it's *smart love* that people in the second half of life can advance and I think it is part of the test that people need to be mindful of and push towards. "Smart love" leaves its mark on others and on the planet and on the person themselves and I believe it's what the elderly need to get on with to the extent they can.

Q. Someone has written that in most of the world's religions, the spiritual practices that professional religious voluntarily undertake—relinquishing material goods, perhaps celibacy and solitude—are similar to the losses the very elderly undergo. Couldn't these "necessary losses" be used by older people to deepen their relationship with God?

A. My father said, "Children are lent to you; you give them back to God and to the world." Even our bodies are on loan. My house is 272 years old; I am its temporary steward or caretaker. My name is temporarily on the deed in a long succession of names. It's the same with relationships. We connect temporarily, hopefully choosing well those we love and live with and those we work for and under, and how we earn our daily bread. We only have 80-some years on the planet. We had best use them wisely and cope with the consequences of our choices. People go on and the planet goes on when we are gone, just as it did before we "came up." We own nothing but our souls and they are half God's. If you know you are only "*a caretaker*" for people or things, that they are "*on loan*" to you, to properly deal with and help if you can, then you won't be as upset when they die, move away, break, decay or otherwise change. So, "necessary losses" is a common phrase but off the mark. You can't lose what you don't own.

Q. Can you tell us something about your own spiritual journey. What are some of the stepping stones that shaped your religious vision?

A. I would probably start with Sorbonne educated Jesuits in college who gave me a rich feel for philosophical traditions and existential traditions. They were in personal contact with Jean Paul Sartre in Paris, and were in active dialogue with some of the great European philosophical thinkers. At the same time I was acquiring a rich interest in visual arts through course work in college and also working in a hospital where I saw suffering and ageing. So I could see the light and the dark and the philosophical.

Probably my next experience was of personal illness, when at age 30 I had cancer with surgery and radiation. It was a very growthful experience and spiritually enriching for me.

I think preparing my children for international existence in the 21st century has also been very growthful for me.

Q. How was your experience of cancer spiritually valuable?

A. The logical question at age 30 when you are stricken with cancer and you are under the radiation beam is, "Why me?" And the answer that

Janet Gnall

came back from the divine principle within me was, "Why not you?" That was very heartening, in a strange way, because it basically said, "Get on with it and make a difference with whatever life lies ahead of you." I recall a very short poem by Randall Jarell called "A Man Said To The Universe." It goes like this:

> A man said to the universe, "Sir, I exist."
> "That," replied the universe, "implies in me no sense of obligation."

I think that's a wonderful statement of the light and the dark of spiritual growth, the internal and external work that needs to be done.

Q. Do you practice a religion?

A. Yes, I'm Roman Catholic. It's a kind of internal Catholicism that's very gospel-centered and hopefully in the spirit of Vatican II. It involves trying to do good in the world.

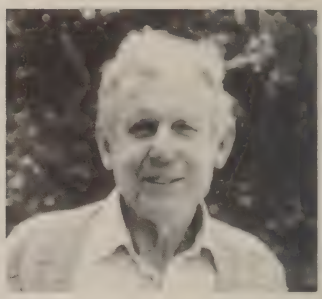
Q. How do you go on doing good in the world, day after day, year after year—extending your warmth to people—without your own spiritual and emotional flame burning out? Is your scripture-centered religion the answer?

A. Christ rested many times, and obviously that had to do with burnout. So yes, that is a model, among many models in the old testament and other religious traditions. I've learned to take breaks, to refuel. I have a view of the greatest good for the greatest number. If I am dead of a coronary at 50, I will not do as much good as if I pace myself doing this sort of work to 70 or 80. I think I'll do more good if I set aside my ego needs to see more patients. So I live as if I'm going to go on forever, but I do it in a paced way. If it was good enough for Christ, there must be something in it.

Q. Thank you!

Saving the Earth

THOMAS BERRY



Newsweek *has called Thomas Berry "a provocative figure," whose writings have aroused environmentalists "like a voice crying for the wilderness." When he spoke at Fellowship in Prayer's Worldwide Day of Prayer and Meditation to Help Heal Mother Earth, we heard a prophet calling each of us to a rediscovery of humanity's ancient reverence for life. In the following pages, he offers a vision for the future of our planet that celebrates the interdependence of all creatures as equal members of a truly sacred and cosmic community.*

I'd like to tell you just this about my personal story: I've lived in 9 of the 10 decades of the century. Sounds awful doesn't it! But now from this vantage point, I've begun to write my observations on the 20th century, and I note there are three major points which seem to be emerging. The first is the devastation of the planet. In the eighties, more life was destroyed than ever before in all history, and it was destroyed irreversibly. The second is the radical incompetence of the educational and religious institutions to deal with the problem. We have great universities in the metropolitan areas of New York with no effective program at all to deal with the most significant event in our times, the destruction of the planet! And religious people seem to be oblivious of the problem. But the third thing I see emerging is the rise of a new vision of an integral planet, of an integral human presence with the natural world, of something that evokes the beauty of the planet rather than extinguishes the beauty.

We are at the end of the Cenozoic era, when the earth was at its most beautiful. Some people say we are at the end of the enlightenment pe-

A former monk, Director of Graduate Studies in the History of Religions at Fordham University, President of the American Teilhard Association, and founder of New York's Riverdale Center for Religious Studies, Thomas Berry is one of the foremost leaders in the eco-spirituality movement. His latest book, The Dream of the Earth, *has been widely acclaimed.*

riod, or we're at the end of western civilization. That's minor compared to what the reality is! The important point is that we're at the end of a biological age. Not just of a species or two, but of a whole wave of life, of millions of years of development that gave us this gorgeous planet that we're living on. This country was beautiful beyond expression when we first came. Probably 50 to 100 million people were living in the Western hemisphere, and living in such a way that the planet maintained its basic integrity. Then we swept across the globe in a kind of assault on the whole biological period, killing species that took hundreds of millions of years to evolve. We are in the process of extinguishing rain forests that took 60 million years to become what they are now, and we are extinguishing them at the rate of at least an acre a second.

It's largely the arrogance of humans that's at fault. It appears that in the western psyche there's a deep hidden rage against the human condition. We refuse to accept the chill of winter or the heat of summer; we refuse to change. We are going to air condition, we are going to heat. Certainly we need a certain amount of that. We need to protect ourselves; we need to survive. But we assault the planet as though we were determined to tear it to pieces. Many other cultures in the world haven't done things this way. When we look to the indigenous people in this country, for instance, the attitude is quite different.

The West—the Judeo-Christian world—has been criticized severely as the root of our ecological crisis. This particular understanding comes from the biblical injunction: go out and subdue the earth. That is most important, but humans since Neolithic times have put stress on the planet. Other civilizations are not blameless. The Chinese, for example, have the best philosophy of human-earth relations of any of the so-called classical civilizations, but already in the Neolithic they had started cutting down trees and they never stopped, and China is now a devastated continent. Plato observed some 2500 years ago that the hillsides of Greece had been denuded and the springs had dried up. The Romans protested somewhat about the trends, but the Mediterranean area was devastated nevertheless. Also North Africa once had a very luxuriant growth. So it's not simply the western world that's destructive. We are the geniuses at it, however. We come in with a certain technological genius.

What also implicates the West is what might be called its sense of historical realism, which gave us our idea of progress. That also comes from the Bible. But particularly since Francis Bacon's time, and Fontenel's and Bufont's, in general since the Enlightenment, we've cherished the idea of progress. First the progress of the mind, then the progress of society that culminated in Marx, then biological progress with Darwin, and philosophical progress with Hegel. It means control over the natural world, which is limitless. The more progress we have, the more the planet is mechanized, and the more the planet is mechanized, the more biological processes are destroyed.

> If we lived on the moon, our sense of the divine would reflect the lunar landscape. Our imagination would be empty, our emotions would be dull, our intelligence wouldn't be anything to speak of, because there wouldn't be any words. There wouldn't be anything to name—or very little—and because we wouldn't have an outer life, we wouldn't have an inner life.

Now where do we go from the terminal Cenozoic era? My idea is that we need to go into what I call the "Ecozoic" era. What I mean by the Ecozoic is the period of the integral earth community. I express it with the Exodus symbol, which is the central symbol of the Bible, the central symbol of the West. It's the passage from oppression to liberation, from

an impoverished condition to a fulfilled one. What I'm suggesting is that we enter an Exodus situation. I don't mean an exodus of some segment of the human community or even of the human community in its entirety. Its an exodus of the entire planetary process. From the dying Cenozoic into the Ecozoic, from a destructive period to a creative period. It has to do with what might be called "the sacred community." One of our difficulties is that "sacred community" as we've generally thought of it is some limited group of humans who are very special in relationship to the birds or the trees or whatever. But we *all* have to embrace the larger world of life as a sacred community. The human community and the natural world will go into the future as a single sacred community or we will both perish in the desert. Let me give you five characteristics of the Ecozoic period, so you'll see why.

First, the universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.

Secondly, the planet Earth must survive in its integrity. It cannot survive in fragments—anymore than an arm can survive separated from the body.

Thirdly, it's a one-time affair, there's no endowment, there's no other source to go to. Once a species is destroyed, neither heaven nor earth can replace it. It's gone forever. What do you have when the Rainforest is gone? Dust.

Fourthly, the integrity of the planet has to come before ourselves. The reason is, if we don't have air to breathe, then we have no existence; if we don't have water to drink, we die. Religion, too, depends on the grandeur of the earth. The mystery of things impinges upon us because we have such a gorgeous planet. If we lived on the moon, our sense of the divine would reflect the lunar landscape. Our imagination would be empty, our emotions would be dull, our intelligence wouldn't be anything to speak of, because there wouldn't be any words. There wouldn't be anything to name—or very little—and because we wouldn't have an outer life we wouldn't have an inner life.

Fifthly, and this is the primary characteristic of the Ecozoic period, planet Earth is going to function in a totally different way in the future than in the past. The challenge lies with education, which has to rediscover its mission. All the other professions have to get in on this also.

Humans had nothing to say about the Cenozoic era, but almost everything that's going to happen in the Ecozoic will relate to ourselves. We

Janet Gnall

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cannot make a blade of grass, but there may not *be* a blade of grass unless we protect it and nurture it. So we have a fantastic mission ahead of us. This in some sense has to be the very soul of education, the very soul of religion, the soul of all the professions. We have to protect the rainforest—and everything else—from ourselves.

In ethics, we have moral positions on suicide, homicide, genocide. But when it comes to biocide and geocide, the killing of the planet itself, we have no morality. Biocide and geocide don't even come up in ethics except as a kind of an addendum somewhere. The truth is, we are into a deep cultural pathology. We are in a catastrophe. What we have to do is go through a grieving process. We have to feel the sadness. Then the scene will brighten and we will begin to do what needs to be done.

After Climbing Mount Carmel

Mothlike you gnawed my desires my spirit is broken
My Lord, who leads me blind and enclosed through unfamiliar
paths through unknown routes
Way, My God's ancient way, Jacob's ladder, Judith passes in
the midst of enemies, disguised at night—they fail to
recognize God's trail
You give me the sprint of a doe and unto summits you prompt
my steps
Give me a simple heart that fears Your Name
My soul rests in you like a child against its mother

Night when You create me anew You give me forgetfulness of
my memory and my soul like a bird escaped from the nets of
thought
I had eyes to see and did not see You
ears to hear and did not hear You
but I know that my eyes will see a land with broad expanses
they will contemplate Your Royal loveliness
Night—the phantasms, the mirages and the dream of life have been
dashed
Night which lightens my darkness
Night when You give birth to me Your chrysalis
Night when You guide me outside myself through a sure route
Night all distance abolished You give Yourself
You put Your desire in me and my womb trembles
at the touch of Your presence.

Your NAME
You beget it in an unknown virgin part of my being
and I become a reflection of Your face
beyond all knowing I only know Love

Lisa Boscane

When The Sea Comes Calling

I built my house by the sea.
Not on the sand, mind you.
Not on the shifting sand.
And I built it of rock.
A strong house.
By a strong sea.
And we got well-acquainted, the sea and I.
Good neighbors.
Not that we spoke much.
We met in silences.
Respectful, keeping our distance,
But looking our thoughts across the fence of sand.
Always, the fence of sand our barrier;
Always the sand between.

And then, one day—
(I still don't know how it happened)—
But the sea came.
Without warning.
Without welcome, even.
Not sudden and swift, but sifting across the sand like wine,
Less like the flow of water than the flow of blood.
Slow, but coming.
Slow, but flowing like an open wound.
And I thought of flight and I thought of drowning and I thought of death.
And while I thought the sea crept higher, till it reached my door.
I knew, then, there was neither flight, nor death, nor drowning.
That when the sea comes calling you stop being good neighbors,
Well-acquainted, friendly-from-a-distance neighbors,
And you give your house for a coral castle,
And you learn to breathe under water.

Carol Duchesne Bialock

In my Eightieth Year: Waiting

I am waiting for Godot
we had an appointment
to meet under Macy's clock

I am waiting to hear
I had the wrong day

I am waiting to find
the road less traveled
I am waiting to learn
that I have been
on the path all along
in that case
I am waiting for Godot

I am waiting for a friend
to ask me to tea
instead of meeting in coffee shops
in either case
I am still waiting for Godot.

Esther Travers

An internationally known poet, Lisa Boscane is a member of the Poor Clare Community in Nice-Cimiez, France. Her work has been translated into English by Professor Mary McCarthy of Georgian Court College in Lakewood, NJ.

Carol Duchesne Bialock, r.s.c.j., who spent 19 years in Chile forming Base Communities, divides her time between writing and serving the homeless in San José, CA.

Esther Travers is a poet, painter, and short story writer.

Six Spiritual Needs of Americans Today

GEORGE GALLUP, JR.

"Will we choose the living God, or will we choose the substitute gods of the modern age—money, possessions, fame, drugs, a self-indulgent lifestyle?" George Gallup—whose name has become a household word—raises questions and gives some answers about the way Americans are making their spiritual choices today.

The new frontier of social research is, I believe, the inner life. The last half of the current century has been dedicated to the exploration of outer space. The next century, I think we may assume, will be dedicated to exploring inner space. There are undoubtedly many exciting discoveries ahead as we seek to probe beneath the surface of lives. Having said this, however, I should hasten to add there are obvious limitations to the depth of exploration possible.

Yet I believe that carefully conceived and executed surveys that penetrate beneath the surface of lives can further the kingdom of God. It is my belief that, since the vast majority of the people of the world believe in God or a power outside ourselves, the most profound purpose and worthy pursuit of scientific surveys is to probe the response of humanity to God, to the extent that this is possible.

Now, I would like to turn to six basic spiritual needs of Americans at this point in history (apart from their natural needs for such things as food, clothing and shelter) and to explore the question of whether churches are relating to these needs, as well as to discuss possible steps to help churches better meet these needs.

The need to believe that life is meaningful and has a purpose.

During a time when sociologists observe an obsession with self in America, 70% of Americans nevertheless believe it is very important that life is meaningful and has a purpose. Yet now as many as two-thirds of peo-

Co-chairman of the Gallup Organization, Executive Director of the Princeton Religion Research Center, and Chairman of the George H. Gallup International Institute, George Gallup holds a religion degree from Princeton University and is a committed Episcopalian layman. Mr. Gallup lectures widely and serves on numerous boards. Among his books are America's Search for Faith, My Kid on Drugs?, Forecast 2000, *and* The People's Religion.

Janet Gnall

ple interviewed believe that "most churches and synagogues today are not effective in helping people find meaning in life." Here is a basic need apparently being only partially met. The fact is, significant numbers of people find churches irrelevant, unfulfilling and boring.

The need for a sense of community and deeper relationships.

Many factors conspire to cause separateness in our society. At a personal level there is high mobility, divorce and the breakup of families. In the aggregate, the world is becoming increasingly impersonal with the growth of megacities, multinational corporations, and bureaucracies. "Radical individualism" has taken hold in the religious lives of Americans. The large majority of Americans, for example, now believe that one can be a good Christian or Jew if one does not attend church or synagogue.

One of the poignant consequences to this separateness is loneliness. As we have discovered from surveys, as many as 3 persons in 10 say they have been lonely "for a long period of time."

Our churches, synagogues and other faith communities need to deal frontally with the separateness and acute loneliness in our society by encouraging corporate worship, as well as participation in small groups. Small groups, rooted in prayer and Bible study, may be the best hope for a renewed church in the 1990s.

The need to be appreciated and respected.

This is certainly a basic and fundamental need, yet as many as one-third of the American people have a low sense of self-worth or self-esteem, as

> The new frontier of social research is, I believe, the inner life. The last half of the current century has been dedicated to the exploration of outer space. The next century, I think we may assume, will be dedicated to exploring inner space.

a direct consequence of not being loved or appreciated. Low self-esteem brings with it a host of social problems, including alcohol and drug abuse, child and spouse abuse, lawlessness and crime.

Significantly, we have discovered that the closer people feel to God, the better they feel about themselves. They are also more satisfied with their lives than are others, more altruistic, enjoy better health, and have a happier outlook. Furthermore, we have found that experiencing the closeness of God is a key factor in the ability of people to forgive themselves and others.

The need to be listened to—to be heard.

The main theme in our book, *The People's Religion*, is that religion in the future is more likely to be shaped from the bottom up than by the top down: from the people in the pews rather than by the hierarchy. In a special survey conducted for this book, we discovered that Americans overwhelmingly think the future of the church will be shaped to a greater extent by the laity than by the clergy. Not only do they think it will happen, they believe also that it should happen.

In specific terms this means, for example, that the laity should play a greater role in the church, freeing up clergy to perform what the laity expects of them: to listen to people's religious needs and to provide spiritual counseling and inspiration. When the unchurched in one survey were asked what would most likely draw them back into the community of active worshippers, the lead reason given was "if I could find a pastor, priest or rabbi with whom I could share my religious needs and doubts."

The need to feel that one is growing in faith.

People do not like to suffer periods of spiritual stagnation, and the fact is we go through passages in our faith lives, just as we do in our secular lives. 7 Americans in 10 say they have experienced a change in faith during their lifetimes.

It would appear that, basically, people aspire to lead good lives. Significant numbers of people have given thought to living a worthwhile life, to their relationship to God, to the basic meaning and value of their lives, and to developing their faith.

Churches need to pay close attention to the passages people experience in their faith lives, and to religious experiences which often change the course of one's life. People need help in understanding the significance of these experiences and in building upon them.

Janet Gnall

The need for practical help in developing a mature faith.

The clergy often tend to make assumptions about the depth of religious commitment in the lives of members of their churches—to assume that their prayer life is more developed, and that people have a higher level of knowledge about their faith and the traditions of their denomination—than actually is the case. Clergy therefore can often find themselves in the unfortunate situation of trying to win support for programs and causes from a laity that is spiritually listless and uninformed.

A close look at where people are in their spiritual lives, and the level of their knowledge, would shock most clergy: we read the Bible, but we are a nation of biblical illiterates. We pray and believe in the power of prayer, but do not give our prayer life the attention it deserves. We believe the Ten Commandments to be valid rules of life, but we are unable to name many of them. We would be hard pressed to defend our faith, because we are uncertain about what we believe, let alone why we believe.

We need to work toward closing the gap between belief and practice—we need to turn professed faith into lived-out faith. What is called for are not new committees, new strategies or position papers; we need nothing less than changed hearts.

Two major challenges face all churches: to reach as many people as possible, and to reach them as deeply as possible, to broaden the church itself and deepen it. Perhaps the deepening process should come first, because parishioners must first be prepared and equipped before they can be effective in evangelistic efforts.

Thanks to the unprecedented level of freedom in the United States, Americans are able to make choices about their future. These choices, many believe, apply most deeply at the religious level: will we choose the living God, or will we choose the substitute gods of the modern age—money, possessions, fame, drugs, a self-indulgent lifestyle? Will our religion be God-given or man-made? To quote Rev. Peter Moore, an Episcopal priest, in *Disarming the Secular Gods*, "We have no significance, health or happiness save that which comes when we surrender the illusion of being the center of the universe and joyfully celebrate God at the center."

Members of Fellowship in Prayer in 80 countries form a global spiritual community of men and women—many of whom organize groups or correspond with each other in order to share spiritual insights and to pray together. If you would like to hear from or write to people in our Interfaith Network, please send your name and address to us at 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542, and we will list it in our next issue. If you wish, we will publish your name in care of the FIP office and forward your first two letters to you.

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Rock Ritual II

ROBERT O'ROURKE

For Native Americans, as for this author, a creature as small as a stone contains a revelation of God's mystery.

The Plains Indians who once roamed the vast prairie expanses of Middle America believed a tiny part of the "Great Spirit" resided in rainbows, rivers, stars, trees, chickadees and rocks. Their intimacy and respect for nature gave them knowledge of a "Great Mystery" who formed all things. They listened to the wind, birds, insects and all that grows seeking for the harmony and continuous prayer of creation. Their ears were tuned to the voice of God in much the same way as the writer of Job:

> But ask now of the beasts,
> and they shall teach thee;
> and the fowls of the air,
> and they shall teach thee;
> or speak to the earth,
> and it shall teach thee;
> and the fishes of the sea
> shall declare unto thee.
> Job 12. 7-8

The whimsical spirit-songs-of-God are everywhere "teaching" and "declaring" with a "still, small voice."

The Sioux believed certain rocks were *waken* (holy, sacred). Their legends tell of a *Watai*, a special stone among the billions scattered across Mother Earth with a personal message for every person who ever lived . . . a stone silently waiting since the dawn of time and marked by the "Great Spirit" with "medicine" (power, wisdom, truth) for each life. Waiting for those whose spiritual journey takes them beyond words and books, TV and computers back to the ground of their being . . . back to the earth and a humble rock.

A regular contributor to FiP, *Bob O'Rourke is a Colorado writer and folk artist who carves* santos *(statues of the saints most revered by the people of New Mexico and the southwest). His article is a sequel to "Rock Ritual," which he wrote last year in celebration of FiP's first annual Worldwide Day of Prayer and Meditation to Help Heal Mother Earth.*

Having heard this enchanting story from Eagle Man, an Oglala Sioux, I became more appreciative of the rocks and stones that presented themselves to me as I hiked the same prairies that had once known the feathered hovering of a hawk, the earth-shaking thunder of a thousand buffalo hoofs and the soft tred of countless moccasined feet. Often a rock would call to me and I would pick it up to study its surface for meaning. Each rock reflected a unique beauty in a glint of color, design or fragrance. (Yes, rocks have a flavor . . . an aroma of their own.) And while each rock was different and worth my meditation, I placed many of them back where I had found them trusting that somewhere was one rock set aside for me.

One day I discovered my *Watai* stone; not on the sacred prairie but in a noisy city parking lot. An orphan! So out-of-place there. A single sparkle of light from Father Sun across its rough, gray surface revealing, for my eyes only, an outline of a tall pine tree, a familiar mountain and a marked path. Truly *"waken"*!

My *Watai* stone rests now on my work table waiting for our next silent meditation. It promises other revelations, unexpected truths, unknown serendipities . . .

The legends of the Sioux promise a rock fashioned just for you from the time-of-beginning. May the same Great Spirit direct your path to that distinctive stone and touch your life with mysterious delight and peace.

Native American Prayers

Lean to hear my feeble voice

At the center of the sacred hoop
You have said that I should make the tree to bloom.
With tears running, O Great Spirit, my
Grandfather,
With running eyes I must say
The tree has never bloomed
Here I stand, and the tree is withered.
Again, I recall the great vision you gave me.
It may be that some little root of the sacred tree still lives.
  Nourish it then
  That it may leaf
  And bloom
  And fill with singing birds!
Hear me, that the people may once again
  Find the good road
  And the shielding tree.
    Black Elk

Earth our mother, breathe forth life

  all night sleeping
  now awaking
  in the east
  now see the dawn

Earth our mother, breathe and waken
  leaves are stirring
  all things moving
  new day coming
  life renewing

Eagle soaring, see the morning
  see the new mysterious morning
  something marvelous and sacred
  though it happens every day
  Dawn the child of God and Darkness
    Pawnee Prayer

O Great Spirit
Whose voice I hear in the winds,
and whose breath gives life to all the world,
hear me! I am small and weak, I need your strength and wisdom.
Let me walk in beauty, and make my eyes
ever behold the red and purple sunset.
Make my hands respect the things you have made
and my ears sharp to hear your voice.
Make me wise so that I may understand the things
you have taught my people.
Let me learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock.
I seek strength, not to be greater than my brother,
but to fight my greatest enemy—myself.
Make me always ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes.
So when life fades, as the fading sunset,
my spirit may come to you without shame.
Traditional Native American Prayer

Ask Angela

BARBARA ACKERMAN

Do you have a question of the heart or spirit that needs attention? Angela, our canine sage-in-residence, would love to help. Please write to her in care of FiP, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542, and she will give you her answer in our next issue.

Dear Angela,

Would you please share with us your thoughts concerning feelings and their expression? Thank you.

Sincerely,
Ambivalent

Dear Ambivalent,

Thank you for asking about such an important topic. Once again, I am deeply relieved to discover that I am not the only soul on the whole planet who feels a bit wishy-washy when it comes to feelings and their expression. One thing is very clear, however: before we can express feelings, we need to feel them.

Feelings flow. They are natural and organic. Feelings are not bad or good, they just *are*. Whether we notice it or not, we are always feeling our feelings. Unfelt feelings may lead to a bellyache or a headache or other type of dis-ease. If we feel sad but don't allow any tears, we may sniff our sniffles out for an entire week with a headcold. Since we cannot stop the flow of feelings, it would serve us well to stop judging these little critters as much as we do. Labeling some feelings "O.K. to feel" and others "not O.K." is another common pitfall. For instance, there is a common belief that feeling anger is simply not nice. I am a firm believer in the inevitability of anger. I believe in the well-placed growl and the unsquelched bark. The other day when I returned home from a stroll, I spotted a uniformed U.S. postal employee walking through the middle of my very own front yard. I began barking. The postal employee left my yard in the wag of a tail. It felt refreshing to bark at someone about something. Barking cleared my head, cleared the air, and my front yard. But it wasn't fair, because the postperson didn't deserve my free expression of my snarlies. Keep in mind that you get the most mileage by snarl-

ing at the situation—not the soul—you are feeling snarly at. There is less long-term reward in snarling randomly at anything in front of you. In a pinch I have been known to snarl at my own shadow.

There are moments when I stand up unequivocally for full and complete expression of one's feelings immediately to anyone available. One instance is hunger. When I'm feeling hungry and the bowl is empty, I always express my hunger fully to any beloved I see.

Another instance where I believe in full expression of feelings is when my buddy wants to rub my chest and I don't feel like curling up and settling down. When I feel like pacing back and forth and barking by myself in the basement, choosing to be honest about it is a difficult choice for me to make. I don't want to hurt my friend's feelings when I express my own. Sometimes expressing our feelings can be hurtful, so each of us must decide what is best for all concerned in a given moment. Honesty may indeed be the best policy. On the other hand, we may be equally correct in keeping our feelings to ourselves.

We may be so shy that speaking our deepest feelings may be beyond what we feel we can safely manage. Being a shy soul myself, I know how difficult it can be to express all of those warm, soft feelings we have for another. I have deep feelings for my buddy; I just don't want to *discuss* it. I cannot bear to share all that's in my heart. For all of us who would rather pace back and forth in the basement by ourselves than to have an "I love you" leave our lips, I offer this: you can create your own sacred language of love or borrow mine. This language is specifically for the sincere but shy of heart. For example, five vigorous wags means "I've missed you." One paw gently placed on someone's left arm says "I need you." Three licks on the nose means "I love you." As a shy soul, I have found the sacred language of love a real blessing when life has required honest expression of feelings but I have felt too shy to say them.

In closing, I leave you all with my final and firm parables of feeling.

(1) Feelings are not bad or good, they just *are*.
(2) All living souls feel feelings. They come with the territory. Relax and enjoy them, or don't relax and enjoy them—whichever will be more fun for you.
(3) When expressing feelings, honesty is the best policy except when it isn't.
(4) With feelings, there is a time to wag and a time to weep, a time to keep silence and a time to speak.

Faithfully,
Angela

Three Years of Unemployment

JOSEPH IMEDIEGWU

Looking for work in the Third World felt for this writer like the Israelites' Journey to the Promised Land. "Would I ever get there, or would I be bitten to death by a serpent?" he wondered. But depression became a "test of faith," and he persevered in prayer until one day a surprising event occurred.

I had just finished my past primary education and was looking forward to starting a new life as a worker. I bid good-bye to my little Nigerian village and left for the city. I was born and bred in the village. I didn't know what life in the city was going to be like.

Once there, I wasted no time in looking for a job. I hit the streets with my small bag, going from one company to another submitting applications. I came from the eastern part of the country and was looking for a job in the west. The air of discrimination was blowing. In some companies, my applications never went beyond the receptionists, but I was undaunted and continued my search. The big blow came when the government stopped hiring. There was nothing like America's unemployment benefits. Times became hard, but I never gave up hope. I intensified my search. The heels and soles of my shoes rebelled for want of repair, but I could do nothing.

Time sprinted by and before I knew it, I had been unemployed for two years. A senior officer in one of the government offices where I looked for work advised me to go back to school for higher education. After two years of vigorous search for a job, I found myself back in the classroom for a two-year Higher School Certificate Course. At the end of the Course I came out with new knowledge: life is tougher than I had envisioned.

Please send the story of your own "transforming experience" (typed and double spaced), to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

Janet Gnall

I then travelled to Jos in search of the elusive job. I was so badly treated that I vowed never to come to this city again. I went back to Ibadan in the west and continued to search for a job—any job—just to earn some money and keep body and soul together. I began to think I was an ill-fated soul and cried throughout the nights. Six months of fruitless search passed when I went to Lagos and took a job as a laborer in a construction firm.

Three months of hard work passed, then another problem reared up its ugly head and I was out of work again. I began to think I was destined to be a failure in life. I protested in prayer to God, reminding God that my faith was being tested.

The storm of life continued. I was wandering in the wilderness of uncertainty. I never knew which end would lead to light. I was waiting for any eventuality. I thought I would soon die. Sometimes I likened my situation to the Israelites' journey to the Promised Land. Would I ever get there or would I be bitten to death by a serpent? Who knew? I was the walking dead. I gave myself a phony name, "Citizen Lonely," even though I had a couple of friends.

Three years of unemployment rolled by. One day as I was sitting on a wall brooding over my predicament, a white man came over and sat with me. As depressed as I was, I wished he would go away and leave me alone in my lonely world. I needed no one's company but he was not willing to go. It was my intention to walk out on him but I couldn't, for reasons I didn't understand. He introduced himself as Father Bill from America.* He was visiting Nigeria for the first time. I wasn't interested. He noticed the depression in me and wanted to know about me. I was shy and found it difficult to open up. I wanted him to go away but he refused to leave. The man of God wanted to be my friend and possibly end my depression. He took me to his room in the Bishop's house where we exchanged addresses. He was to leave Nigeria in a week's time. He asked me to visit again and to write him when he went back to America. I promised to write back but I never did visit him again for I didn't know what to discuss with him even though there was a lot to say.

Back in America, Father Bill wrote me first. He insisted on knowing more about me. I had been told times without number that God will not come down to earth in person, but works through human beings. Could

**Fr. Bill Whittier is pastor of St. Bridget of Sweden Church in Lindstrom, MN.*

God be working through Father Bill? Would Father Bill try to help me if he heard my problem? I opened up in my letter to him and told him of my misfortunes.

He shared my letter with his parishioners with the purpose of giving them an idea of what life in the Third World is like. Some parishioners acted quickly by donating some money for me to start a small business of my own. I went into the footwear business as a door to door salesman. Eventually, I was able to rent a shop where I now sell these shoes.

Today, I am a changed man. No longer destitute. No longer depressed. I do not pray for death anymore. That feeling of resentment is gone. I feel loved and cared for. My hope of survival has been rekindled and I'm totally different from the "Citizen Lonely" Father Bill found sitting on a wall: now a smiling Joseph, who can tell people to have faith in God. For God has a purpose for us, no matter how hard our situation may seem.

A Mother and Daughter Psalm

MIRIAM THERESE WINTER

All O Nourishing, Nurturing, Mothering God,
from our mother's womb You are our life:
You must know how much we love You.

Voice 1 Thank You, God, for this bundle of life
who was once a part of my body,
the focal point of my inner world,
the "I Am" of Your making,
whose struggle to be and become
someone
stretched the womb
of my being
until there was no more "I"
but "we,"
and the two of one flesh
became two in one spirit,
a never-to-be broken bond.

Voice 2 Thank You, God, for this source of life
responsible for my growing,
in whom I lived
and moved
and had my being,
who shares the pangs
and understands
each bringing to birth
in me.

All O Nourishing, Nurturing, Mothering God,
from our mother's womb You are our life:
You must know how much we love You.

Voice 1 Thank You, God, for this child of love

A professor of Liturgy, Worship, and Spirituality at Hartford Seminary, Miriam Therese Winter is the author of WomanPrayer *and many other books. She also has recorded a dozen music albums, including the award-winning* Joy is Like the Rain. *Her psalm is taken from her most recent book,* WOMANWORD: a Feminist Lectionary and Psalter. *(Copyright 1990 Medical Mission Sisters. Reprinted by permission of the Crossroad Publishing Company.)*

who feeds from the wellspring
within me,
who daily grows
more capable
of nourishing, nurturing me.

Voice 2 Thank You, God, for this mother-love
so full to overflowing,
whose breasts of compassion
comfort me
when the pull to move out and discover
pushes against the limits
of my finite capacity.

All O Nourishing, Nurturing, Mothering God,
from our mother's womb You are our life:
You must know how much we love You.

Voice 1 Thank you, God, for this child of choice,
mirror of my meaning,
who shares my joys,
supports my views,
and never forgets
the little things
that matter so much to me.

Voice 2 Thank you, God, for this mother of mine,
gift of Your own giving,
who knows my needs,
who lets me go,
no matter how hard the leaving,
and who is always there for me.

All O Nourishing, Nurturing, Mothering God,
from our mother's womb You are our life:
You must know how much we love You.

We welcome your comments. Please send them to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

We learned about your Worldwide Day of Prayer and Meditation for the purification of our planet after it had occurred. So we missed the opportunity to observe it as a Day of Prayer.

We and a number of our friends in Moscow are members of a small spiritual group. We feel our responsibility to contribute to the process of spiritual integration of humanity through prayer, the distribution of information about the different faiths, and interfaith dialogue.

We would be happy to learn more about Fellowship in Prayer, your goals and activities. We would welcome the opportunity to participate with you in joint prayer.

Sergei Badeyev and Dinara Badayeva; Moscow, USSR

Thank you! We all love and very much appreciate your journal.

Partap C. Aggarwal; Thally, India

Thank you for your journal. It is truly a light in the darkness.

M. O'Neill; Huntington, WV

It was such a joy to find *Fellowship in Prayer* in my mail box this week. It was truly like having a long-lost friend reappear and promise to visit regularly. I am now busy reading the issue and enjoying it all immensely.

I have an ongoing, real sense of God's presence with me, and an awareness of trying to be open to God's guidance for me. However, in prayer—in saving a special time for prayer—I can be lax. But the inspiration of my favorite magazine is already sending sparks, gentle and non-inflammatory, into the Divine-filled Center in my being to help make prayer come more alive again. Thank you!

Linda Haines; Nevada City, CA

I was thrilled, upon receiving a gift subscription to *Fellowship in Prayer*, to discover a sensitivity to other living beings and to the earth, which I had previously not seen in spiritual publications. The first thing I read when *FiP* arrives is, of course, "Ask Angela."

I publish Letters for Animals and am also engaged in a difficult campaign to ban target-shooting of live pigeons, turkeys, ducks, and chickens. In one of these events, 8,000 birds are released from cages one by one to be shot while people picnic!

Leonardo DaVinci wrote, "The day will come when people will look upon the murder of animals as they now look upon the murder of humans." Schopenhauer stated, "I know of no more beautiful prayer than that which the Hindus of old used in closing their public spectacles. It was, 'May all that have life be delivered from suffering!' " More recently, Pope John Paul II said, "Animals, too, have souls, just like men and women." This ethic is spreading but vigorous help is needed to effect change. I ask for your prayers and personal involvement to protect our defenseless fellow beings.

Lynn Manheim; La Plume, PA

Thank you for your wonderful journal. I am very impressed by it and will be using it in my ministry.

Rev. Thomas Bohache; Roanoke, VA

When I wrote to you, explaining that I have to be at home most of the time because of an illness, you sent me—much to my delight—not only a subscription but an envelope with several back issues. Thank you. *FiP* is a wonderful, uplifting publication. What I enjoy most is the variety of approaches in your writings to the Spirit and to Life.

Shira Lee; Nevada City, CA

I always enjoy your publication. Frequently the material seems like a "sign-post" from God pointing me in the direction I need to go. And the photography is superb. I'm a painter and appreciate the visual.

M. D. Schmolze; San Jose, CA

I want to thank all of you for sending me free copies of your journal. It has helped me a great deal. My mother passed on 2 months ago, and it is hard for me, after being in prison for 9 years, to know she won't be there when I get out. It hurt that I wasn't able to attend her funeral. But I went back to your journal and found strength. Today I thank God for everything.

Michael B.; Hardwick, VA

Please put us on your mailing list. We are a group who believe:

You are for the Lord and not for others.
You are for the Lord *and so* for others.

Thanks a lot for your inspiring publication.

Ray Hanselman; Ligate Publishers; Virginia Beach, VA

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